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AFRICAN HOMICIDE AND SUICIDE

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HOMICIDE AND SUICIDE AMONG THE JOLUO OF KENYA

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101 The Luo ("Jaluo," singular; "Joluo," plural) are unique in that they are the only Nilotic speaking people in Kenya. Their place of origin is the Nile Valley, through the centuries by gradual expansion by war and peaceful penetration, they migrated up the Nile Valley, through Uganda, into Kenya, along the shores of Lake Victoria. The term Luo means "swamp" and Joluo "the people of the swamp." Through their migrations they have left behind other Nilotic groups in Uganda and in the Sudan.

131 The Joluo are chiefly concentrated in Central Nyanza where over half a million of them are found today. There are, however, Luo pockets in North Nyanza and also in South Nyanza.

631 The Luo of Central Nyanza are divided into twelve tribal groups. Each tribal group, with a Government-appointed chief, today forms an administrative unit, a "Location," within the District of Central Nyanza. These administrative units, laid down in the early twenties, coincide fairly accurately with the former tribal boundaries and are accepted by the people.

614 Each Luo tribe can be described as a society of agnatic parallel lineages or clans, each tracing either real or mythical descent from a common eponym or descent through an adopted or affiliated family to the eponym.

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[17] The original form of the clan and lineage structure remains today in comparative purity. The Joluo people—although on the surface they have accepted Christianity—still retain the ceremonial, religious, and ritual aspects of their culture to a very large degree.

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614 very large degree. Their family system remains strong and
 176 largely unimpaired by the impact of Western civilization. The
 patriarch of the extended family unit, the *jokakwero*, remains
 the local authority. Because a series of family groups together
 form a territorial unit, the sub-clan, the strength and solidity
 of the Luo family and lineage structure remains supreme. Ob-
 viously there have been changes. Basically, however, the
 changes are superficial.

512 The role of women in Luo society is a subordinate one. In-
 digenously they play no part in the major ceremonies or rituals
 and have never had political authority. They do not organize
 in age groups or societies as in other cultures, and remain
 primarily the property of their father and his lineage or, on
 marriage, the property of their husband and his clan.

515 Polygamy is still the ideal and goal of the majority of Luo
 men. A recent village survey showed that taking a sample of
 744 homesteads, which varied between a simple monogamous
 family and the very large unit of the extended polygamous
 family, 55 per cent were monogamous units, of which 9 per
 cent had a leviratic wife or wives, thus making them socially
 polygamous units; 45 per cent were polygamous homesteads,
 of which 11 per cent had a leviratic wife or wives. Only 27 per
 cent of the total sample were found to be simple monogamous
 households, that is one in four of the family type associated
 with Western culture: a man, his wife and children. The re-
 mainder were either polygamous or had leviratic wives or were
 of the extended family type. Of this 27 per cent, moreover, it
 was the ideal of the vast majority to become polygamous later.

871 Education among the Joluo has increased rapidly in recent
 years, and it was found in our sample that 63 per cent of the
 boys of school age were either at school or had been to school
 for more than one year. The figure was 30 per cent for the
 girls. Of the adult males, however, only 26 per cent had been to
 school, and of the married females, only 7 per cent. The stand-
 ard attained, moreover, was not high. More than half the male

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group had less than three years' education and over half of the female group had less than two years' education. This pattern, however, as already indicated, is changing rapidly. The majority of the Joluo are nominally Christians, although half of those who called themselves Christians were polygamists. Historically, of course, all of the schools in Luo were Mission schools and therefore those who go to school tend to call themselves "Christians," and most of them in fact have a basic understanding of the Christian religion.

One aspect of Joluo life which has changed considerably is the tremendous increase in spatial mobility. Prior to European ascendancy, the Joluo did not move among the tribal units because of the continual wars between them. Moreover, banishment from the tribe usually meant death at the hands of the neighboring Nandi, Kipsigis, or Masi. Lately, however, the village census established that most Luo males had been out of their district and well over half had been to Nairobi or beyond. At any given point in time nearly one half of the adult male population is engaged in employment away from the tribal area. Nearly one half of the Joluo adult women in the sample, 40 per cent, had been outside of their district, although only 11 per cent had been to Nairobi or beyond. It is the custom, therefore, for married men to migrate for labor and to leave their wives and families in their family locations to cultivate the gardens.¹

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The Nilotic Joluo regard violence as an unnecessary loss of control, or at best a calculated necessary last resort to secure

¹ Professor E. E. Evans-Pritchard has written a study of the Luo in his "Luo Tribes and Clans" (*Rhodes-Livingstone Journal*, No. 7), and description of the marriage customs of the Luo in his "Marriage Customs of the Luo of Kenya" (*Africa*, Vol. XX, No. 1, 1950). Dr. A. Southall has published a memorandum entitled "Lineage Formation among the Luo," Memorandum 2275, International African Institute, London, 1952. My own work among the Luo, *Luo and Custom of the Joluo People of Kenya*, is forthcoming.

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183 goals which have been carefully weighed and assessed as to the possible supernatural and social consequences. The Juhos believe that a goal does not justify the means if the means require violence, unless all methods of arbitration, conciliation, appeal to authority, both temporal and supernatural, have been tried and proved to be unsuccessful or inadequate.

783 Violence requires cleansing—physical and spiritual cleansing
 642 of the most exacting nature—to avoid the supernatural consequences (*chiwa*) which violence may bring in its wake. One case has been recorded which contains an excellent description of the ceremonial and ritual cleansing thought to be essential after a murder. This particular murder was planned and executed by a group which, after years of thought and effort to resolve the conflict without violence, finally resorted to murder. Obviously, with the coming of the European, other factors were involved to escape detection for an act which in the old days would have given the group high status within its own community and which would have created feuds or precipitated a war that ultimately would have been resolved by blood compensation or actions of the political unit and migration by the weakest group.

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 628 Violence which arises immediately and unsystematically from quarrels, drinking, infidelity, sex, marital tensions, or family differences, and which results in a death, is not regarded in the same way as premeditated action decided upon as a last resort. Ceremonial cleansing is still necessary but does not take the extreme form because these acts are regarded by the Luo as bringing consequences which affect the individual only, that is *kwar*, and not *chiwa*, which affects the group, clan, or tribe as a whole. Fortunately British law makes a similar distinction: that between murder and manslaughter. It will be found therefore that the majority of cases involving Juhos which have come before the courts of Kenya as murder cases are resolved and punished as cases of manslaughter. The Juhos do not, however, understand why many of these convicted in-

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for the head of manslaughter should be punished at all. They feel that a person who makes the mistake of killing is angry is or has been or will eventually be punished by the ancestors, God, the elements, by illness, bad luck, misfortune, or the like, in the inevitable nature of things.

It is believed that cold-blooded, premeditated murder brings shame to the group and is therefore punished by the tribe or by the segment affected. The group or the individual who took what they regarded as this calculated risk was eventually banished from the tribe or if large and strong enough to dominate the political unit to which the deceased belonged could force his supporters, usually his segment of the clan, to break away and leave the area. Leo kinship describes all members of the clan in the same genealogical generation as brothers, brothers-in-law, cousins, but a very wide range.

Leo clans occupy and are identified with a geographical area. The clan and the area it occupies are usually called after the eponyms of the tribe. Those living within a clan or tribal area who are not members of the clan or tribe are regarded as squatters (*paik*) with limited rights. They may be considered squatters, but most often are found to be allies of legitimate clan members. Murder committed by such persons incites immediate retribution on the part of those who belong to the head by virtue of descent, jequing. Cattle could be taken by force, the culprit banished or killed, and/or a woman from that group married by a member of the dead man's minimal lineage, his phloson, to raise and raise the dead man's name. This woman would be regarded as the wife of the dead man, her children would phrase his ghost as father (*uano*), the physical father would merely serve as guardian.

One major clan, Kabin, of a powerful tribe, the Sonu of Central Nyassa, descended from a woman of this type—but then not exactly of this type: what happened was as follows. A *paik*, living in the clan area of Sonu, killed the son of an important elder of the tribe. He fled to his own tribal land to

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614 avoid the immediate consequences and as a result war broke
 612 out between the people of Lomo and the people of his tribe,
 628 Ugeya. After many years of intermittent and bitter warfare
 611 the elders of both tribes met to settle the dispute. Their solu-
 764 tion was as follows: because the elder who lost his son did not
 583 have an unmarried son to take a woman of the killer's clan,
 and because the killer's minimal lineage did not have a suitable
 daughter to give in marriage, it was decided that the killer
 should marry the daughter of the deceased's father, and
 through her raise seed to the dead man. The killer, contrary
 to custom but as part of the settlement, was forced to live at
 [587] the home of his bride and was subsequently adopted into the
 clan of the deceased. It is interesting, however, that the epon-
 ym of the clan which today traces descent from this couple
 is the bride, Kia, and not the killer or the deceased. It is, to my
 knowledge, the only clan in Luo which has a woman as an
 eponym, but then she was apparently regarded as a male by
 her contemporaries.

674 This background was given to provide the reader with some
 775 idea of the Joluo attitude to homicide. Deeply ingrained is the
 notion that life goes on after death on earth—that ancestors in
 the spirit world are able to influence the lives, conduct, fortunes,
 for good or evil, of their descendants. Ghosts are more likely
 to be benevolent if they can count numerous descendants on
 earth and extremely malevolent if life on earth was cut short
 by violence or unnatural death by war, accident, or suicide.
 The ghosts of the latter are believed to be more difficult to deal
 with than those of ordinary spirits of old men or women. The
 more descendants a ghost has, the higher its status in the after-
 world, and therefore the greater its pleasure and benevolence.

708 The Joluo had developed several devices to deal with cases
 of homicide. A wife could be married in the name of a mur-
 611 dered youth to raise seed to his name, to placate his spirit
 and to continue his line for posterity. A young adolescent
 woman who died was deflowered by a stranger (jokouey)

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because a ghost of a virgin who has reached puberty was regarded as extremely dangerous. The defilement, still practiced in parts of Luo today, was regarded as satisfying her natural desire to bear children. 763

The spirits of warriors killed in battle were placated by the tribe as a whole in ceremonial and ritual held at the borders of the tribal land (thim) by pure bile and two horns, where sacrifices were made and the tribal ancestors placated to welcome the ghost of the hero. The affair became a tribal responsibility, whereas normally death is regarded as a responsibility of the family or minor lineage segment. 766 767 [76]

A person who found the body of a man or of a woman would commence wailing as a closely related mourner. If the body turned out to be that of a person among whose clan the finder could marry, then a wife or husband was found for the finder in the belief that the spirit of the deceased planned and directed the discovery of the body to the end that the group of the finder should be united in marriage with that of the deceased. 768 765 583

Witches, if caught in the act of "running about at night," were killed instantly and with equanimity. The body of a person killed as a witch was mutilated by driving a stake into the rectum after which the body would be thrown into its village. An old custom still associated with this is the insistence of the relatives of a woman who died suddenly, or inexplicably, to examine her body for signs of having been a witch. Female witches are believed to be trained by their husbands to run at night with them and, because they are weaker, are frequently caught and killed. Bride-wealth may not be reclaimed or, if not finally paid, must be completed by her husband if a woman is killed under those circumstances. 754 483 [763]

Accidental deaths are regarded as having been inspired by the ancestors, and therefore require placation of the spirit of the ancestor divined as having been responsible. Deaths from sickness are believed to come from many causes, the chief of 761 [769] [765]

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76/ which is the infidelity of the spouse of the deceased, in the case
 [85] of a child, by the adultery of its mother. Ritual cleansing of
 the members of the entire lineage is therefore necessary, as for
 later.

159 I mentioned above a classical case of homicide which il-
 679 lustrates what the Jolas regard as a calculated risk of the con-
 628 sequences. It deserves fuller analysis.

Case No. 1.

This case involved a group of nine related men. Only one
 of them was convicted, and he eventually was acquitted on
 appeal through lack of corroborative evidence.

A quarrel began between members of two major clans of the
 same tribe over the appointment of an assistant chief. The clan
 from which the assistant chief was appointed—we shall call it
 Jeketh—is alleged to have taken advantage of the clan—
 which we shall call Jeketh—which was unsuccessful. The clans
 feuded in every way, over land, cattle grazing and so on, until
 the elders of Jeketh decided, as a warning in the ancestral way,
 that they should burn the hut of a leading elder of Jeketh. This
 was done. The assistant chief arrested a member of clan Je-
 keth, a person with whom he is alleged to have had a personal
 grievance, and this man was convicted of the burning and sen-
 tenced to a term of imprisonment. His sons fought hard and
 long to have him released on grounds of ill health and, when
 finally successful, took him home only to have him die shortly
 after. On his death bed, he made his sons swear to avenge his
 death.

Diviners and medicine men were consulted, and many meth-
 ods were tried unsuccessfully for several years to bring clan
 Jeketh to its knees and to bring about the death of the assistant
 chief who had by now retired.

All was not well with the affairs of Jeketh clan. Each new
 catastrophe was taken as evidence of the malevolence of the
 ghost of the deceased because his death remained unavenged.

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Finally, in desperation, his son and a group of his *phakura* 151
 consulted the head *jabile*, *jabile*, to choose an auspicious day 674
 for the killing of the ex-chief and to collect the animals and 628
 materials necessary for cleansing after the deed had been ac-
 complished.

The ex-chief was found and stalked to death at the place
 named by the *jabile* and his body was hidden in a nearby cove.
 It was found several days later, and a witness was found who
 alleged that he came upon the group on the day of the murder
 in the act of disposing of the body.

Those who had had actual physical contact with the blood 151
 of the murdered man were cleansed as soon as they arrived 783
 home by the leading *jabile* of the clan. He used a grey ash 824
 from burning the sacred *bumbura* vine. The minimal lineage,
phakura, assembled at the village of the senior son, who was
 the head of the lineage segment, and who had struck the fatal
 blow. There the following cleansing ritual was performed:
 at about two o'clock the following afternoon, a black sheep and
 red chicken were slaughtered by the head of the lineage. The
 sheep and chicken were first prepared by the *jabile*, who
 placed his medicine in the mouth of the sheep and of the
 chicken before the sacrifice. The *jabile* cut strips of skin from
 the animal and wrapped them around the spear and knives
 used in the murder. The spear had to be destroyed at midnight
 because the victim was related to the spear clan of the tribe.
 The meat was divided on the lineage principle and consumed
 communally. The meat of the chicken was eaten only by those
 who actually struck blows.

The purpose of these sacrifices was stated by the *jabile* to
 "keep the spirit of the murdered man from doing evil to the
 clan." It also cleansed the bodies of those who drew blood so
 that they could now eat with their families and once more par-
 ticipate in the activities of the village and clan.

After the meat was eaten, those present held a meeting to 151
 decide which old woman should act as a wife to the ghost of 748
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159 the married man, to secure his death, to placate his spirit,
 73 and to obtain the grey ash medicine left over from the first
 74 channelling to be used when necessary to remove the danger of
 his ghost returning to harm members of the clan. An old
 woman past child bearing, poor, was selected and agreed to
 perform these functions. She was given animals for this service
 and a hut was built for her outside the village, where she plac-
 ated the spirit of the dead man.

159 Most Jolas will agree that when a witch is killed, the dead
 642 man's relatives do not take legal action but try to cover up the
 739 incident. This is not difficult in Luo society. One case did,
 however, occur during the period of this study which could
 not be hidden from the authorities.

Case No. 2.

A youth of seventeen was escorting his sister from a marriage
 ceremony back to their village some miles away. It was late
 at night or early in the morning, time could not accurately be
 ascertained, when suddenly an apparition appeared in the path
 of the couple. It was a naked man—swearing, jumping, scream-
 ing, and brandishing fire which glowed red as he waved his
 arms. The night was very dark and to the young couple the
 apparition appeared as a ghost. The woman fled the way she
 had come but the youth in his frantic effort to escape stumbled
 and fell. The "ghost" was on top of him instantly, clamping at
 his face and throat. The youth had a death knife in his belt
 and frantically struck out blindly several times as he managed
 to struggle free. He fled back to the village from which he
 came. A party of youths and men armed themselves and set
 out to search for and kill the witch but were unable to find
 the exact spot in the darkness.

67 Next morning a body was found, naked, and with several
 642 stab wounds on it. The man was identified, and the finder,

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opponent of the previous night's events, notified the police. Thus 159
the story was out. 642

The Joluo were concerned that the youth should have been arrested and charged with murder. He was acquitted after trial on the grounds of self-defense, but the opinion remained that he should have had praise and not have suffered the indignity of being held in custody which, to the unsophisticated, was punishment and prison.

The Joluo discipline wives and children, when it is thought necessary, by beating and kicking. One or two cases each year come to the courts as a result of excessive force resulting in the death of a victim of discipline. Out of 46 cases between 1940 and 1954, 10 were of this type. 593
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The largest number of murder cases today arises from drunken quarrels during beer parties. Native beer does not have a high alcoholic content, but a beer-drink often begins at mid-morning and continues well into the night and, on special occasions, until the next day. The quantity consumed therefore frequently produces an acute state of drunkenness. Of the 46 cases, no fewer than 12 can be classified as the result of excessive beer drinking. These cases, without exception, were finally treated by the courts as manslaughter. 642
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Family quarrels, often over bride-wealth payments, account for a few cases every year. A typical case of this type is as follows. 159
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Case No. 3.

In 1949, the Accused caught his wife in the act of adultery with an acquaintance. The wife returned to her father's village, as is the custom in such cases, and made several efforts to elope with her lover. On each occasion, her brothers forcefully restrained her and threatened her lover with a severe beating or death, should he attempt to elope with their sister. After several weeks of argument and numerous meetings of the eld-

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ers of the clan involved in the case, the husband went to the village of his wife and took ten head of cattle by force from her father's herd. This action is approved in customary law after the elders have met and discussed the matter and are unable to resolve it by any other method.

Naturally the brothers of the girl were extremely angry that their sister should have behaved in this way that meant the loss of animals which they, no doubt, had planned to use for their own bride-wealth. The girl remained unrepentant and troublesome. She stated that she was determined to return to her former husband's village to collect her clothes, and that she would leave her brothers and her former husband in order to join her lover. Her brothers followed her to the village of her former husband and there began to quarrel. Her former husband joined the group, and the three decided to teach this woman a lesson. They beat her with sticks until she was dead.

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The court took a lenient view and decided that their intention was not to kill the woman but merely to discipline her, and each of the Accused was sentenced to six months hard labor for manslaughter.

The next case also arose out of bride-wealth.

Case No. 4.

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In 1949, a woman left her husband to live with her lover. Her husband tried through indigenous and legal channels to get his bride-wealth returned. The woman's father, however, had used the animals and could not return them, although he was sympathetic. The husband, therefore, was left with only one course, to demand the return of his wife. To this end, he went to the village of her lover and threatened him. They began to quarrel and to fight. Each was armed, the lover with a spear and the Accused, the husband, with a panga and a knife. The lover was killed and the husband charged with murder.

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In this case, the court decided that this was manslaughter,

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and the Accused was sentenced to three years' hard labor. The sequel to the case is that the wife was repentant and returned to the village of her husband and was there to welcome him on his return from prison.

Polygamy is the desired goal in marriage in Luo society. The word for co-wife in the Luo language is *ng'ika*, which also means jealousy of an intense kind. The jealousy between co-wives occasionally ends in quarrels which result in the murder of one or the other.

Case No. 5.

A quarrel developed between the senior and most junior wife, when the latter accused the former of trying to poison her child. Her child was an adopted child, being a child of the deceased second wife of their common husband. When a woman dies, it is customary for the husband to decide which of his wives should act as foster mother to her children. This quarrel began because the senior wife had demanded custody of the child but the husband decided to place the child in the care of the junior wife, who had no sons. The argument went on for years. The child became ill and the junior wife was convinced that he was poisoned by the senior wife. A quarrel developed and the junior wife, who had just returned from the fields with a punga in her hands, struck the senior wife, killing her instantly.

Again the court decided that this was a case of manslaughter, and the accused was sentenced to four years' hard labor.

The Joluo people have a custom at marriages of "pulling the girl" to the village of the groom. Traditionally, the brothers and friends of the girl should resist this "capture." In fact, however, the marriage has been arranged by them and both parties are fully aware that this is a mock battle. On occasion these fights become a spirited and serious "free for all." From time to time, therefore, one or more of the party is seriously

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583 injured and not infrequently death results. Indigenuously the
 662 method of resolving this situation is to cancel the arrangements of the wedding which was to have taken place and to continue these arrangements to marry a girl to the dead man. If the dead man is from the party of the prospective groom, the girl is married to his name. If the death has occurred among the relatives or friends of the girl, then a bride is chosen from the relatives of her prospective husband to marry in the name of the dead man. Whenever possible, this custom is followed today. The authorities, however, naturally prosecute in cases of this kind. The result is usually manslaughter, and the sentence is a light one.

682 There are cases in which it is difficult to determine whether the death was caused intentionally or accidentally. For example: a food which is now becoming increasingly used is the cassava root, and raw cassava contains cyanogenic glucoside which, when acidified by gastric fluid, forms hydrogen cyanide and is therefore a virulent poison in this form. Adequate cooking destroys this poisonous principle, and most Luo women clearly understand this. Therefore, when the death occurred of a child who had consumed cassava which had been prepared and given by a co-wife, its mother's suspicion was immediately aroused. She accused the co-wife of giving the poison intentionally. It is very difficult, however, to prove, as in the case mentioned, that death was caused intentionally and not accidentally by the ignorance of the co-wife. The case was dismissed by the court.

514 The sequel, however, was that the husband did not accept the explanation of ignorance and divorced the woman because, as he stated, "there would never be peace in my village. It is obvious what this witch has done and although she has been a good wife to me, she has broken my village and killed my child. I therefore will divorce her and get my cattle back to marry some woman who is not a witch."

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SUICIDE AMONG JOLUO

We have discussed the Luo attitude toward death at some length in our description of homicide. These attitudes apply equally to suicide, except that they are extended to an association of the idea of death and its concomitant link with the supernatural to self-destruction, as an assurance or determination on the part of the individual to hasten the day when supernatural forces can be made to bear on the frustrations which led up to the act of suicide. The motives for suicide are thought to be to avenge the dead by the malevolent supernatural forces which at death become allied to the dead, who are able to use them against those on earth to solve problems which they found beyond human solution.

Throughout childhood there is constant reference to suicide, and in adolescence, early marriage, and old age the threat of suicide is an effective technique used by the Joluo to achieve goals or to avoid distasteful consequences. Threats are not often put into practice because they are used only when their effectiveness is relatively assured. [557]

Unfortunately for the student, suicides are not usually reported to the authorities, although legally they should be. Therefore, few cases are recorded as in advanced countries in the coroner's court. The Joluo believe that suicide brings shame to a large segment of the clan of the suicide, and it is therefore kept as quiet as possible and dealt with immediately by the clan elders and clan medicine men, *jebbo*. The family of the suicide are forced to perform cleansing rituals and ceremonies before they may again participate in the social life of the clan. Data are for these reasons hard to collect. The few cases which were brought to the attention of the authorities were only those suspected of having been cases of murder which were made to look like suicide. 762 763

During a two-year tour among the Joluo tribes of Central Nyanza, I was able to collect 220 cases from informants. Of 762

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762 this number, 90 were male suicides and 130 female. I have
 123 selected for the purpose of this chapter 10 male cases and 13
 762 female cases as typical, and these were investigated in more
 detail to provide examples. Considerable time was spent among
 the villagers in each case, and full discussions were held with
 the elders in an attempt to determine the motive and the events
 which led up to the suicide. For obvious reasons, I shall not use
 correct names when describing these cases.

MALE SUICIDES.

776 Male suicides in Luo usually follow loss of status. Seven of
 558 the ten cases can be so classified. The first five are of the type
 which involved intense emotional feelings of shame, loss of
 honor and status within the framework of the indigenous cul-
 ture. Following these are two case histories of suicides which
 involved loss of status in the acquired or modern sense. Two
 cases will be described which involved the loss of status
 through poverty and the loss of traditional respect of sons, and
 finally one case which resulted from social ostracism.

762 The first suicide concerned a man whose younger brother
 159 married before he did. In Joluo society, men of the extended
 family marry in strict order of status, that is, the senior son
 of the senior wife must marry first. It may happen that he is
 [582] younger in chronological age than, perhaps, a son of a more
 [584] junior wife, but even in this circumstance, the younger son in
 years, who is senior in status, is technically married before his
 brother—that is, the payment of the first animals for a young
 girl allow the senior son to marry.

Suicide Case No. 1.

A young man who was the senior son of a senior wife was
 chronologically the oldest of all the sons in the village. His
 father and mother were both dead and, although he would
 [824] eventually become head of the homestead, until he married he
 was regarded as a juvenile.

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was regarded as a juvenile. The homestead was supervised by the levir of his father's second wife. The young man desperately wanted to marry. His stepmother, however, had spread the rumor that he had had syphilis. Therefore none of the eligible girls would have him. He went to a medical dispensary off and on for several months but treatment was not successful. 762 159

While he was away, a half brother, the son of the senior living wife of the village, married without his knowledge. The young man obviously had been under intense emotional strain caused by the rumors and gossip associated with the fact that he had a venereal disease. He was the senior son by Luo customary law and on marriage would be the head of the village. His half brother had taken a wife. This added to the humiliation and shame and would bring ridicule upon him whenever he met with his contemporaries for the rest of his life. This was too much. He went to the *thim*, the no man's land surrounding his clan grazing area and the place where the ancestors are normally placated, and there hanged himself from a tree. [626]

His brothers and relatives were concerned about his absence and suspected what he had done. He was found by one of them after many days and his family and minimal lineage group completely destroyed the tree, including the roots, and there on the spot buried him and performed his funeral rites. The family was cleansed by the *jabilo* and the ancestors placated to receive his spirit by the sacrifice of a white cockerel and a black sheep. [783]

The first son to be born to his brother's marriage was named after him to placate his spirit and to continue his name in the lineage genealogies.

Naming a child for a relative who had died is used by the Joluo in many ways, but only after consultation with the *jabilo*. It is obvious therefore that any misfortune which occurred to the family or to the lineage segment after this suicide was attributed to it. The fact that the first child born after the suicide 762 553

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553 was given his name reveals their attempt to avoid the consequences of his act.

762 The second case arises from a breach of customary law which
159 in the old days would have meant banishment but which today
684 brings social ostracism.

[178] Suicide Case No. 2.

The suicide was caught in the act of intercourse with his full brother's wife. The Luo believe that such an act involving members of the same *Jokamio* (that is, those descended from the same mother or grandmother) brings *chira* to the whole clan. The security and solidarity of family relationships are threatened by the act because it involves quarrels which may lead to violence within the primary segment of the clan. In this case the brother did not tell the elders of the clan but merely threatened to do so. The guilty man returned to his own homestead and hanged himself in his hut. The house was destroyed and members of the extended family were cleansed by the *ja-bilo*. The cleansing ceremony took the same form as in the first case, with the addition that the village was sprinkled with medicine in order that it might continue to be used by the dead man's family.

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In the next case there are two clear motives which led to the suicide. The first, perhaps the most important, lies in indigenous beliefs and attitudes, while the second lies in more modern attitudes.

Suicide Case No. 3.

159 This Luo was about 30 years old and had been employed as
762 a driver for the Government for many years. Drivers in Kenya
556 receive a relatively high salary, and in addition some take advantage of their position and make extra money by illegally charging people for transportation. Through these activities, he
[661] became a relatively rich man and was able to marry a total of five wives at his comparatively young age. He was also wealthy

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in cattle, and had a permanent modern house at his homestead where four of his wives cultivated large gardens. His fifth wife lived with him at his place of employment. At the time of his suicide he was in the process of marrying a sixth wife when, during one of the marriage ceremonies at her village, a brother of the bride objected to her becoming his wife. He charged that the man had already too many wives and could not look after them. As proof, he offered the evidence that his most recent wife, the fifth one, was no more than a prostitute and that he, himself, had used her on several occasions. This caused a fight in the village and quarrels which led to the exchange of many curses between the two groups, and therefore the wedding could never take place. The driver returned to his homestead to confront the wife named in the incident with the accusation and, in typical Luo fashion, she calmly admitted her guilt, chiding him to do something about it. He beat her severely and she ran from her house and spent the night in the bush. He brooded all night on what had happened and on the shame his wife had brought him. Moreover, he knew that he was shortly to be accused of fraudulent conversion of funds by the Government and would lose his job, if he did not end up in prison: neither of which were considered really serious. However, in his emotional state, these must be considered as contributory causes. He could see his whole world collapsing, around him. [556]

The next morning he sent his servant, a young lad, to the butcher's shop for meat in order to get him out of the way. He then hanged himself from the ceiling of his hut.

My Luo informants state with confidence that the prime cause of this suicide was the behavior of his wife, which had brought shame to a proud and successful man, so that he could no longer face his friends. The fact that the Government was interested in recovering a large sum of money which he was alleged to have used for his own purposes is, in my opinion however, a contributory factor. [558]

*African Homicide and Suicide***Suicide Case No. 4.**

762 A young lad aged about 23 years was being married to a
159 girl from a neighboring location. He had paid a portion of
584 bride-wealth and many of the early ceremonies had been performed. His bride had returned to her home as is the custom until he had paid the remainder of the bride-wealth. He went to his father-in-law to discuss the last and final payment, with his *jagam* as witness, and the father-in-law agreed that a milch cow would complete the payment. He returned in high spirits to the home of his father and asked for the cow, stating that this was all the father-in-law demanded. His father told him that if he had not paid enough, then the father-in-law must be a bad man and the girl was not worth having. The father and the son quarreled, and during the quarrel the son threatened suicide if he did not get the animal. The next day the son took a cow by force, while his father was absent, and sent it off to his father-in-law by a group of herd boys. When the father returned, he was furious at what his son had done and went after the cow himself. He caught up with the boys and brought the cow back to the village.

159 The son had warned his father that, if he should take this
762 course, he would hang himself, and, as he saw the father returning in the distance, he hanged himself from a tree which stood just outside his father's village. This tree, as is the custom, was completely uprooted and destroyed.

762 The next cases are two which were due to modern circumstances but which in a sense involve the loss of status and
159 therefore brought shame to the individual.
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Suicide Case No. 5.

A young man eloped with the wife of a Kikuyu in Nairobi, far from his homeland. Whereas in Luo customary law to run off with the wife of another man is not considered to be particularly serious, in Kikuyu customary law it is regarded as

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a criminal offense. He was caught, and the Court fined him a relatively large sum of money and gave him thirty days in which to pay. He became very depressed and, after unsuccessful attempts to raise the money, he hanged himself.

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Suicide Case No. 6.

The man involved was in his early thirties, and was in a position of trust with a Local Government body in Nyanza Province. He was alleged to have abused his position of trust by embezzling a considerable sum of money. The auditors had come across this defalcation in the books and brought it to his attention, but before he was arrested he killed himself by falling on a knife. Both the cause and the method can be said to be modern.

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Case numbers seven and eight involve a loss of status, but on the other hand are attributable to poverty.

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Suicide Case No. 7.

An old man whose wives had all died had to depend on his sons for support. The sons supported the old man while in his village but, after a quarrel, built a new village of their own and refused to build a house for him. As he had no one to support him and as he felt that he was ostracized by his sons, he had, to quote the Luo elders, "No other recourse than to commit suicide. His sons killed him and will suffer." He hanged himself on a thick tree which grew by a river, where he was found by an ex-chief. The Luo elders were quick to point out that he achieved his revenge, because the descendants of his sons were already few in number and mostly girls. "The line will die out because they killed him."

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Suicide Case No. 8.

The man in this case was a widower living with his only son, who gave him food, but could not afford to maintain the ap-

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159 appropriate prestige of beer parties and entertainment of his father's friends. On the day of the suicide, a group of the father's
762 friends arrived at the village and the father asked his son's wife to prepare food and drink for them. This she refused to do, so that night he burned himself in his house, which the Luo believe brought ruin to the lineage and particularly to his son.

762 The next case is an interesting one because it illustrates an
159 inherent Luo trait: the profound jealousy of anyone who is
556 successful.

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152 Suicide Case No. 9.

[587] The man who died was the brother of the suicide in case number 2, and took the latter's wives as levirate wives. He also inherited his gardens. Shortly after this, he began to prosper phenomenally. The elders state that his cattle produced mostly heifers and some produced twin heifers. His crops were better than his neighbors, so they began soon to suspect him of witchcraft. In the space of a few years as his prosperity increased, he was more and more ostracized from the activities of the community. The final blow came when his own *libamba*, minimal lineage group, denied him entrance to a lineage sacrifice on the grounds that he was a witch. Ten years after his brother's suicide, almost to a day, he hanged himself.

When the elders were questioned as to whether or not this man was a witch, they replied that he could not possibly have been a witch, because he had committed suicide. If he were a witch, his medicine would have been so powerful that the effect of being ostracized by the community would not have bothered him at all, let alone driven him to suicide.

762 The Luo believe that those most likely to commit suicide
159 are those who have descended from a lineage in which there
828 has been a history of suicide. Case number 2 was the brother of case number 9, and case number 5 the son of case number

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9. This example is used time and time again by the Luo to prove the point that the tendency to commit suicide is inherited or caused by ancestors.

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I was able to follow one particular series of events in connection with Luo marriage laws and customs over three years, which began with the elopement of a girl and her lover, and ended in suicide only a month before this chapter was written.

Marriage in Luo is traditionally arranged by the family of the boy and the family of the girl. Not infrequently, because of debt or close friendship, a father may promise his daughter in marriage to a friend or creditor while the girl is still very young. He obtains the animals to which he is entitled (*dho i keny'*) approximately one half of the final bride-wealth, at that time and the girl is known as *nyar kiseke*, "the wife of the beer reed," as this arrangement is usually contracted and finalized at a beer party. So it was in the case we are about to describe.

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Suicide Case No. 10.

The girl in this case had been promised by her father when she was but three years of age to a friend of his own age group. The father, Opio², was a well educated Joluo, and by the time his daughter, Akech, was ready to be taken in marriage, at the age of 18, he was employed as the headmaster of an intermediate school administered by a local mission. He had insisted that his daughter be educated to enhance the final payment (*dho miluhini*) of her bride-wealth. She was, for an African woman, a well educated girl. She had received a secondary school education where, in this particular segment of the Joluo tribe, fewer than 1 per cent of the girls have had as much education.

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Akech had been prepared for this event all her life. She knew her future husband and from a child, each time he visited

² All names are fictitious, but common Joluo names.

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762 the village, she would be teased and chided pleasantly about
 159 the fact that he was her future husband. Perhaps she would
 584 have been married sooner, had her future husband, Opala, not
 been employed in a city many hundreds of miles away. He
 returned on his long leave to consummate the marriage at the
 time when the girl had just finished her secondary education
 and was about 18 years of age.

While at school, however, Akech had fallen in love with a
 teacher, Okare, in a neighboring technical school and he was
 determined to marry her. He went to her father and pleaded
 to be allowed to repay the bride-wealth animals her father had
 received years before and to complete the bride-wealth pay-
 ments to marry the girl by Luo law and custom. Opio ada-
 mantly refused, and her brothers threatened Okare with physi-
 cal violence if he should try to see the girl again. Okare was
 heartbroken and returned to his place of employment. Akech,
 however, had other ideas. When she was told that the date of
 her wedding had been fixed, she pleaded and tried every tradi-
 tional way of breaking the marriage, but was unsuccessful.
 Her father and her prospective husband remained adamant.³

159 The night before the wedding, she ran away from home to
 762 join Okare at his place of employment. Both knew that they
 584 would be pursued by the girl's brothers and by her father, so
 684 they hired a car and fled to the boy's village in a distant Luo
 tribe, some 200 miles away. Her father, brothers and future
 husband pursued the lovers to Okare's village where the father
 had him arrested for taking Akech from his custody. Okare's
 brothers, however, took the girl to Nairobi to hide her pending
 the result of the case. One of the brothers was then arrested
 for aiding and abetting the elopement.

Now the essence of this case goes to show that the father

[842] ³ By tradition, a girl may run off to the home of a "bride," thus to marry
 will produce sterility. She may climb a tree *bondo*, an *euphorbia*, which
 is believed to be closely associated with the ancestors. There are several
 other ways, all of which would cancel an ordinary wedding, but none is
 effective in the case of *nyar kiseke*.

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wanted the best of two worlds. Traditionally, elopement (*por*) is justified and is legal, albeit more difficult in cases of *nyar kiseke*, providing that the young man has stated his willingness to pay bride-wealth and has been refused. Moreover, it is the last remaining traditional way by which a young woman, forced to marry against her will, is able to break the arrangement. To-day, however, because there are so many illegal unions, the African courts take a serious view of young men and women running off to the towns without the slightest intention of paying bride-wealth. 159 762 584 684

While Okare and his brother were retained in gaol, pending the case, the girl's father and her brothers went to Nairobi, where they found the girl after some difficulty and took her back to her village by force. There they married her to Opala and he, with two of her brothers, took her by force to the place of his employment which was in another territory nearly 700 miles away.

Opio, who was an influential man in his district, then proceeded with the case against Okare and his brother. The Court decided in favor of Opio, ordered compensation for the expenses he had incurred securing the return of his daughter. Okare and his brother were heavily fined for having taken the girl from the protection of her father. The compensation and the fine amounted to a very large sum of money and the boy appealed to the District Officer's Court. Pending the Appeal, he went to search for new employment at Nairobi. Akech, in the meantime, had arrived at the home of her husband in the far away city, only to find that he was already married and that his first wife, as a Christian, refused to have her in her home. Quarrels and arguments began in earnest, with the result that Opala had no alternative but to send the girl back to her father and to demand a divorce. Akech, however, did not go home but returned to Nairobi to Okare. 762 159 684 584

The father heard what had happened and, in the shame and humiliation, hanged himself in a classroom at the school 762 159

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159 where he was headmaster. His final act was to write to all those
 762 involved in this series of incidents, which had taken nearly
 three years, to the effect that his daughter had killed him,
 that shame was brought to his clan and lineage, and that the
 liaison she had formed with Okare would end in disaster. He
 swore he would return in spirit to ensure that the marriage
 would end in failure.

159 It can be seen from this case that the difficult transition
 762 faced by even the most educated Christian Jaluo is compli-
 558 cated by the intense residual customary law and the attitudes
 797 of the people regarding the authority of a father and the duty
 of his daughter to this authority. The father in his case was a
 well educated, highly respected, important person in his dis-
 trict. The daughter, by her behavior, had humiliated him and
 he took recourse in indigenous rules and beliefs to solve his
 problems. They were initially successful. In the end, however,
 the threat to his status as a Christian of the fact that he had
 married his daughter by force to a Christian who was already
 married and therefore a bigamist in the eyes of the Church,
 brought shame and disaster to his social position as a Christian
 headmaster. His final act, however, was typically an indigenous
 one. He would not face the shame and humiliation brought to
 him by the course of events, so he took refuge in traditional
 recourse to suicide as a curse to the future happiness of those
 whom he thought had caused his grievance. To the end, there-
 fore, he struggled to obtain the best of two worlds.

FEMALE SUICIDES

1762 The most common cause of suicide among females is do-
 mestic quarrels and, coupled with that, the fear of physical
 violence from their husbands. Secondly, jealousy between co-
 wives; thirdly, the result of extreme grief, and finally, illness.

In the first category, out of the thirteen cases recorded from
 our sample, seven were of the domestic quarrel type. Of these,
 one was complicated by a curse from the husband, another

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from the fear of consequences arising from the behavior of her son and, in two cases, there was a suspicion that the women did not in fact commit suicide, but were murdered by their husbands in such a way that it looked as if they had committed suicide. 762

Suicide Case No. 11.

A young woman was accused by her husband at a beer party of having slipped quietly out for intercourse with a man from the village. To prove that she was innocent, she hanged herself on a tree which was near the homestead. If she had been guilty, the Joluo argue, "she could have been cleansed, but she could not be cleansed for having done nothing." 762
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Suicide Case No. 12.

A young wife, newly married, had offended her husband in some way and he refused to eat her food. (This is a customary curse and is a very severe punishment to a wife.) She threatened to kill herself if he did not eat it. He then took the food to the senior wife, who ate it, adding insult to the injury already done. The young wife went to her hut where she stood on her grinding stone and hanged herself from the roof. 762
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The elders were quick to point out in this instance that since her death the village had been abandoned and many children of the lineage had died. All this, they believe, was caused by the ghost of the abused wife. 762
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The third case involved a young girl who committed suicide because she did not wish to marry the person chosen for her by her parents. 762
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Suicide Case No. 13.

A very young girl, little more than a child, objected in the traditional way to the union which her parents had arranged.

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762 The parents insisted that she be sent or "dragged" to her hus-
 159 band. On the night of the ceremonial defloration she committed
 584 suicide by hanging. This act is said to have brought a curse,
 not only to the prospective groom's homestead, but also on her
 own minimal lineage. Her mother was so struck by grief that
 she committed suicide later. The mother's case will be dis-
 cussed below as case number 21.

The next two cases are those where foul play was suspected

Suicide Case No. 14.

762 A woman was found hanging by a rope at night by her hus-
 159 band. He dug her grave and had buried her in the morning. In
 578 evidence given at the preliminary inquiry witnesses testified to
 the fact that she and her husband quarrelled some hours be-
 fore her death, as the result of a beer party, and that she had
 left early for her own village. The body showed signs of hav-
 ing been beaten, but her husband argued that he had beaten
 her after she had hanged herself, as is the custom of the Joluo.

The case was not tried for lack of evidence, and the hus-
 band's family believed that she did in fact commit suicide,
 whereas her family believed that she was murdered.

[583] It is significant to note that the husband did not claim the re-
 turn of bride-wealth, as he would likely have done had it been a
 clear case of suicide. Neither did her family offer to repay the
 bride-wealth, or to give another girl in lieu of bride-wealth, as
 they might have done had the husband been clear of blame.

Suicide Case No. 15.

762 A woman had quarrelled with her husband because she al-
 159 leged that he would not give her her proper share of sexual
 595 pleasure. The argument involved other wives and they told
 this woman that her husband hated her and that she would be
 better dead. The next morning she was found on her bed, hav-
 ing been killed by a knife or having inflicted a fatal wound on
 herself with a knife.

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As in the previous case, the woman's family believed that she was murdered and the man's family believed that she committed suicide. It is difficult to say which version is true. It is extremely unusual, however, for a woman to kill herself with a knife, and I have not recorded another case. There was one case among the men, Number 6, but this was a modern "intellectual," who lived in a Council house with a plastered ceiling, which was hardly suitable for hanging in the traditional way.

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The next case is the one mentioned earlier involving a woman's fear of the consequences of her son's behavior.

Suicide Case No. 16.

The woman in this case was the wife of a squatter who was a servant to an important Chief. The Chief helped him to get married to this woman, a local girl who was in fact related in some way to the Chief. After his establishment as an affine of the Chief, the *jadak* became very wealthy and built his own village on a place allocated by the Chief. He married a second wife after the building of his village and, just before the case we are discussing, married a third wife. The first wife had many children, most of whom were daughters. At the time of her suicide, all but one had married and her house was very wealthy. The houses of the other two wives were therefore extremely jealous.

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One day during the short rainy season, the owner of the village, the husband, wished to make a present of *sim-sim* to his Chief and benefactor in order that he might pay the tax which at that time was calculated on the number of wives and also to pay the traditional tribute to the Chief. The woman's son at about that time invited a large number of guests to his village and demanded that his mother give him *sim-sim* with which to entertain them. She refused because she knew her husband intended to use the entire crop. The son disobeyed

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762 his mother and took the *sim-sim* by stealth. When the hus-
 159 band came to collect it for the Chief, he found that a large por-
 [595] tion of it had disappeared. This caused a bitter quarrel be-
 tween him and the boy's mother.

In fear of the consequences of what her son had done, the woman placed a rope, which was used for tying up one of her cows for milking, in a small basket and went out of the village as if to collect vegetables. She went to one of the largest trees in a nearby valley which was hidden from sight by thick bush and there hanged herself. My informant then described the scene as follows: "The first person who found the body caned it very hard and, after having cut the rope, started mourning. The place was soon filled with people and some were asked [783] to bring hoes, axes, and pangas to destroy the tree. There and then people of the village and her lineage started their work and within a day the tree was completely destroyed and all the roots dug up from the ground and burned."

"When I asked why the tree was being destroyed," the informant went on, "the elders told me that it was being done to stop more people from hanging from it, for we Luo believe that hanging is inherited by different people in different clans. If a clan had not had a person hang himself before, it is difficult [824] for one in that clan to hang himself or herself. If a tree on which someone had hanged himself was allowed to remain, it would drag other people to it for the same purpose."

The next case involves a curse as well as domestic trouble.

Suicide Case No. 17.

159 The husband of this suicide had been having considerable
 762 trouble with his cattle and many were dying from disease. The
 578 beginning of the illness coincided with the elopement of her daughter with a young man who had neither paid bride-wealth nor seemed likely to pay it. Her husband blamed his misfortunes on this incident and his suspicions were confirmed by

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the local prophet (*jabilo*). When he returned to the village from his visit to the *jabilo*, he cursed his wife as follows: "I wish the disease which killed my heifers would kill you, my wife, for your daughter is a whore who has brought the disease of her womb to my cattle." From the evidence, the woman seemed to have planned her death carefully. She made her daughters swear that they would not be married to anyone who would ever give her husband cattle. She distributed all of her belongings to them and placed a curse on the village to the effect that her husband should never be able to marry another wife. She then entered her house and hanged herself.

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Since that time, the Luo pointed out, his daughters have all eloped with persons who have not paid bride-wealth and no other woman has ever consented to marry him or to live with him.

The next case is typical of many which involve jealousy at the taking of a second wife, especially without the first wife's permission, or as in this case, expressly against her wishes. My informant was living near the village when the suicide took place and his mother became involved in it. The story was told to me in his mother's presence and she helped with the details.

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545**Suicide Case No. 18.**

A man, Okech, who was happily married, invited his wife's sister, Apolo, to come to live at his homestead to act as a nurse-maid for their first child.⁴

⁴ This is common practice among the Joluo and often the "nurse" (*jepidi*) is later married by her brother-in-law, especially if the sisters co-operate and agree to be happy together. Frequently the *jepidi* will form a strong attachment to her brother-in-law, and marriage becomes desirable or even necessary. If a man marries a *jepidi*, she becomes known as *nyar siweho*, the wife of the same blood, and the children of both wives share the same hut and trace descent through the elder sister. The term *siweho* is also used to describe a girl given to replace a sister who was unable to bear her husband a son; it therefore does have a slight connotation of stigma.

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159 Okech decided to marry the nursemaid but his wife ada-
762 mantly refused to agree. Okech beat her severely and she
595 ran home to her parents where she remained for several weeks.
Her sister, Apolo, continued to live in the village and by now
cohabited openly with the husband as if they were man and
wife. The wife eventually returned and made an effort to ac-
cept the situation as it existed. The husband built Apolo her
own house as the second wife (*nyachira*) in the customary
place in the homestead, but had not paid bride-wealth. In fact,
he had not completed (*riso*) bride-wealth of the first wife,
which added tension to the situation.

All appeared to go well until one night Okech returned from
a beer party and abused his wife. What was more serious, he
went to the hut of Apolo to sleep although it was the customary
period of the month when he should have gone to the house
of his first wife.

Early the next morning, the wife visited the mother of my
informant and insisted that she accept as a gift her cooking
pot and other household utensils. Her excuse was that she had
bought new ones. She returned to her house where she packed
the utensils and sent Apolo to carry them to my friend's mother.
Meanwhile, Okech was sleeping.

She then hanged herself from a rafter in her hut. The noise
of her strangulation awakened Okech, who cut the rope and
made frantic efforts to revive her with water and to cane the
body in the customary Luo manner. His wailing brought his
brothers and relatives from their homesteads nearby.

[627] When Apolo returned she was confronted by the irate broth-
ers of Okech who accused her of being a witch who had
brought *chira* to the village and to the lineage. They beat both
Okech and Apolo and drove them from the homestead. The
hut in which the woman had hanged herself was then immedi-
ately destroyed.

Apolo was not allowed to enter the homestead of her father
who, with his sons, drove her from the clan area by thrashing

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her with canes. She never returned to the district. In time Okech was forgiven and returned to his homestead. He never remarried, but now lives with two leviratic wives.

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Suicide Case No. 19.

This suicide was the junior wife of a very wealthy man. Although he was wealthy, he did not provide the modern luxuries for his wives which are now becoming customary and which carry high status among women. This woman decided that she would take matters into her own hands and killed a goat belonging to herself in order to sell the meat at the market to get money and millet, so that she could get the things that she desired. When her co-wives saw what she had done, they took part of the millet and some of the money. The woman appealed to her husband, but he sided with his other wives. That evening she went into the bush near the village and hanged herself.

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Suicide Case No. 20.

This woman was the second wife (*nyachira*) of a wealthy man who preferred his first and third wives to her. This preferential treatment gave them courage to abuse her often and to show her that they were the only wives of the husband. On one occasion, when she was quarrelling with the husband, the other two wives joined in and beat her and abused her. The husband looked on in amusement. Shortly after, he took hold of her son and began to cane him, saying that he was as bad as his mother. His mother tried to interfere, but was prevented from doing so by her co-wives, who continued to beat her. As soon as it got dark that night, she disappeared. Her son had run away to her mother's home. The people from the village and her relatives searched for her for three days, and at the end of the third day, her people began to mourn as if she were dead. The head of a goat was buried in front of her house to represent her body, for they were certain that she was dead and her body devoured by wild animals.

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762 The elders claim that her life was a tragic one, and that her
154 sister had hanged herself a few years before and had returned
for her.

The next case is the one mentioned earlier in connection with case number 13 involving the mother of a girl who had committed suicide after her mother had forced her to marry against her wishes.

Suicide Case No. 21.

This mother realized that her daughter's death was due to her action. She therefore tried to commit suicide by hanging shortly after she heard the news, but was prevented from doing so by her husband and his children. A week later, she tried to hang herself on a tree by the river but she had been followed by her co-wives, who cut her down in time. Finally, a month later she hanged herself from the roof of her hut and, although she was cut down while still alive by her watchful co-wives, she died shortly afterwards from a broken neck.

Profound grief lay behind the next case. It was related to me by an informant who was present at the time.

Suicide Case No. 22.

A man in the prime of life died suddenly. His death came as a shock to all his friends and relatives, among whom he was regarded very highly. This man had two wives and a mistress (*nyas gogo*). The latter was away at the time of his death visiting her family, and she had been cursed there by her father because she refused to return to the family into which she had been legally married. Her father refused to return the bride-wealth, or to accept bride-wealth from her lover, with whom she was living. When she returned to the village of her lover, she heard the wailing of the women and knew that her lover was dead. On such occasions it is customary to run into the

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village straight to the hut which houses the body and to fall prostrate on it, wailing and crying. However, on this occasion, the woman walked very slowly into the village as if in a daze and without crying and without wailing and without saying a word to anyone. She entered her house and locked the door. Those in the village immediately became suspicious and broke the door down but within those five minutes she was found dead from hanging. The villagers told me that she believed the curse of her father had killed the man she loved, so she went to join him.

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[764]

Suicide Case No. 23.

An elderly woman, whose husband had died, depended on her children for sustenance. In her old age she contracted a disease similar to leprosy. Her son, as is customary on such occasions, destroyed her house in the compound and built one for her outside of the homestead. One morning they found that she had hanged herself because, they stated, of the pain and trouble she experienced through her illness and because she was so unhappy that she could not take her grandchildren to teach and love as was her role in life as a grandmother. Her illness barred her from all of the village activities, and she felt that she was no longer part of the family. Her ghost was not considered to be any more dangerous than that of a person who died a normal death because she was old and her suicide was from old age and weariness. She held no grudge against anyone.

762
159
888
734

[603]

[pp. 214-272 not processed]

ABBREVIATIONS IN THE
CASE CHARTS

682

Acc	Accused
Access	Accessory
Acq	Acquitted
Ad	Adult
Aff	Affine
Ag	Agnate
Appr	Approved
B	Brother
BinL	Brother-in-law
Bond	Bonded over
"C"	"Cousin"
Ch	Child
Chg wtd	Charge withdrawn
cl	Classifactory
Comm	Commuted
D	Daughter
D	Death (when used in Judgment column)
d	Day
Dec	Deceased
F	Father
f	Female
FinL	Father-in-law
G	Guilty
GmuD	Guilty murder, death
Hgd	Hanged
HL	Hard labor
Hosp	Hospital

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ABBREVIATIONS, continued

682

Imp	Imprisonment
Ins	Insane
Ki	Kinsman
m	Male
M	Mother
MinL	Mother-in-law
Mist	Mistress
mo	Month
msl	Manslaughter
mu	Murder
N	None
N.G.	Not guilty
No rec	No record
N.P.	Nolle Prosequi
Prob	Probation
Rel	Released
S	Son
U	Unknown
W	Wife
Wid	Widow
y	Year
yB	Younger brother
Yg	Young
Z	Sister

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[pp. 275-286 not processed]

19:Wilson E-5 (ca. 1950) 1960

FL11 Luo FL11

LUO HOMICIDE

682

No.	Accused		Victim		Kin Rel	Weapon	Judg- ment Sent- ence	Remarks
	Sex	Age	Sex	Age				
1.	m	U	m	U	U	Club	Dis	Quarrel over women at dance and beer drink. Lack of evidence.
2.	m	U	f	U	W	Beating	Dis	Quarrel during preparation of beer.
3.	f	U	f	U	CoW	Panga	Cmsl	Jealousy (NYIEKO) between wives over custody of orphaned child.
4.	m	U	f	U	CoWD	Felsen	4yHL	Inadequate cooking of raw cassava.
5.	2m	U	f	U	Z	Stick	Dis	Bridewealth dispute. Dec tried to leave husband for lover. Her brothers killed her.
6.	m	U	m	U	Ag	Panga	3yHL	Quarrel when drinking.
7.	m	U	m	U	U	Spear	Cmsl	Dec took acc's wife.
8.	m	U	f	U	W	U	Dis	Medical report could not determine cause of death.
9.	2m	U	m	U	Ki	Stick	Dis	Both drunk. Quarrel at dance and beer drink over girl.
10.	m	U	m	U	Ki	Fight	Not proven	Dec had reported a theft committed by acc.
11.	m	Yg	m	U	Ki	Stick	3yHL	Drink and "Bhang".
12.	2m	U	m	U	Ag	Fight	Rel	Dec refused to return plow chains. Fight ensued.
13.	m	U	f	U	W	Club	3yHL	Discipline. Woman was lazy.
14.	m	U	m	U	U	Stick	Dis	Cattle were allowed to stray. Death after beating.
15.	m	U	f	U	W	Spear	Cmsl	Quarrel over wife. Acc bound over for sh. 100.
16.	m	U	f	U	W	Kick	Dis	Acc claimed he kicked at dog and hit wife by accident.
17.	m	15	m	U	F	Knife	Prob	Killed father after having been out all night.
18.	m	U	m	U	U	Knife	Dis	Argument over property. No evidence.
19.	m	Yg	m	U	U	Spear	Dis	Acc a juvenile, confused. Killed playmate.
20.	3m	U	m	U	U	Knife	Acq	All drunk. Dec stabbed a man. Others beat him.
21.	f	U	f	U	U	Ass	Ins	Quarrelled about food.
22.	9m	U	m	U	U	Spear	10d	Avenging father's death. Father wrongfully imprisoned by dec and died as result. Acc 1 released on appeal.
23.	m	U	m	U	U	Knife	6yHL	Quarrel at beer party.
24.	m	U	m	U	U	Knife	6yHL	Quarrel at beer party.
25.	m	U	m	U	U	Spear	Rel	Dec stealing cattle.
26.	m	U	m	U	U	Knife	bond	Quarrel over debt at drinking party.
27.	m	U	m	U	Ki	Knife	8yHL	Beer. Quarrel among kinsmen.
28.	m	U	m	U	U	Knife	Cmsl	With 4 friends tried to "pull" girl. Dec killed in trying to stop them.
29.	m	U	f	U	W	Stick	Chg	Discipline.
30.	f	U	m	U	U	Stone	wtd	Quarrel about making a fire.
31.	m	U	m	U	B	Knife	Dis	Quarrel in bed between brothers. Drunk.
32.	m	U	m	U	U	Club	Chg wtd	Drunk.

19:Wilson E-5 (ca. 1950) 1960

FL11 Luo FL11

LUO HOMICIDE

682

No.	Accused		Victim		Kin	Weapon	Judg- ment Sent- ence	Remarks
	Sex	Age	Sex	Age	Rel			
33.	m	U	m	U	U	Knife	8yHL	Quarrel at beer party.
34.	m	U	m	U	U	Kick	Prob3y	Quarrel about a bicycle pump at beer party.
35.	m	U	m	U	U	U	Dis	Quarrel over land. No evidence.
36.	m	U	m	U	U	Knife	U	Quarrel over women. Drunk.
37.	m	U	m	U	U	Club	3yHL	Acc set dog on dec. Fight set in.
38.	m	U	m	U	U	Stick	Dis	Fight over girl. Guilt not proven.
39.	m	U	m	U	U	Stab	Dis	Longstanding quarrel involving women and pride. Self-defense.
40.	m	U	f	U	U	Knife	Dis	Quarrel about sheep theft. Lack of evidence. Collected blood and tongue to use in cleansing ceremony.
41.	m	U	f	U	L/ZNW	Stick	4yHL	Dec interfered in quarrel between acc and dec's wife.
42.	m	32	f	U	U	Kick	3yHL	Beer.
43.	m	U	m	U	U	Knife	Acq	Fight at wedding. Beer.
44.	m	15	m	U	U	How?	Cns1	Killed in blind anger over insults. Sent to approved school until 18.

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[p. 289-294 not processed]